

Freedom's Feast **LABOR DAY**

On-line resources to get the most out of your AMERICAN holiday celebrations.

LEADER: Welcome to our Labor Day celebration! As summer ends, fall begins, and we return to our busy lives, let's think about Labor Day's original purpose and what our work means to us.

READER: Labor Day has been an official National Holiday since 1894. It honors the working men and women of our nation.

READER: Ten thousand workers marched in the first Labor Day parade in New York City on September 5, 1882. They took an unpaid day from work to show their growing organizational power and to call for improved working conditions.

READER: In the late 19th century, the average laborer often worked a 12 hour day, seven days a week.

READER: Children under the age of 16 were often forced to work in dangerous and low-paying jobs until Congress passed the national Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938.

<http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/childlabor/about.htm>

READER: It's hard to imagine an environment in which workers didn't have rights, children weren't entitled to a high school education and workplace safety wasn't monitored or regulated.

READER: Establishing a national Labor Day was a big achievement for the growing labor movement. It happened because Pullman workers staged a nation-wide strike to make Americans more aware of unjust workplace conditions and the key role that laborers played in our economy.

READER: Yet even with injustice in the workplace, people have always come to America with dreams for a new kind of future.

READER: Waves of immigrants followed the Pilgrims in the early 1600s. Each of our colonies developed a special character reflecting a wide range of religious and political beliefs.

READER: And a new type of citizen emerged. Freed from Europe's rigid class system, he was independent, hard-working, well-schooled, and resourceful. Most importantly his success depended on his own merit.

READER: Benjamin Franklin, one of our oldest Founding Fathers, was one of America's early self-made men. <http://www.pbs.org/benfranklin/>

LEADER: A writer, scientist, businessman, inventor, and philosopher, Franklin was also America's foremost foreign diplomat. He established America's first library and hospital, invented bifocals, the lightning rod, the glass armonica and published "Poor Richard's Almanack," a collection of popular sayings that he edited to entertain Americans, and to encourage habits for success, hard work and frugality.

ALL: *Eat to live, and not live to eat.*

No pains, no gains.

Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.

READER: Franklin never forgot how others helped him achieve success. In 1990, 200 years after his death, a trust fund established in his will to create start-up loans for young craftsmen and



public works projects was worth over \$6,000,000. Another generation of young Americans could pursue their dreams!

READER: For nearly 400 years, America has been the land of dreams for oppressed people everywhere. If we are not Native Americans, we were all, at some time immigrants. We have come from Ireland, Russia, Poland, Scandinavia, Germany, Italy, China, India, Mexico...*(name your own ancestral country if it has not been named)*. Immigrants have been our railroad workers and our miners, our fishermen, lumberjacks and lawyers, our shipbuilders, entertainers, factory workers, our doctors, inventors and shop owners, our farmers, athletes, policemen, firefighters and ourselves *(name the jobs represented in your group)*.

READER: We must not forget that an entire group of Americans came here against their will. Torn from their homeland and their families, African slaves helped to lay the foundations of this country. Out of slavery came citizens who have enriched our nation with their many gifts.

READER: When we know that our government's power depends on our consent and when we are sure that our rights are protected, we can spend our time and energy differently from those who are fighting persecution and oppression.

LEADER: We can create, protest, learn, rest, organize, and invent. We can dream of the job we want and work to fulfill our dream. Listen to these Americans who loved their work and made a difference in other's lives. *(Ask participants to read the following quotes in rotation, citing the author.)*

I never did anything by accident, nor did any of my inventions come by accident; they came by work. **THOMAS A. EDISON**

Never interrupt someone doing what you said couldn't be done.

AMELIA EARHART

Make it good, George, it might be important. **MOISHE GERSHWIN TO SON GEORGE WHILE GEORGE WAS WORKING ON "RHAPSODY IN BLUE"**

Well done is better than well said. **BEN FRANKLIN**

If at first, an idea is not absurd, then there is no hope for it.

ALBERT EINSTEIN

Ability is of little account without opportunity. **LUCILLE BALL**

The reward for work well done is the opportunity to do more.

JONAS SALK

One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.

NEIL ARMSTRONG, ON THE MOON, 1969

Be true to your work, your word and your friend. **HENRY DAVID THOREAU**

Give the lady what she wants. **MARSHALL FIELD**

ALL: May the year ahead bring good health, rewarding work and the chance for our work to be a blessing to ourselves and those around us.

Enjoy your meal! Try "What Did You Do at Work Today?" to enrich your table conversation. It was developed with our Raising Citizens partner, the Children's Museum of Manhattan.

www.freedomsfeast.us/l-d/documents/what-did-you-do-at-work-today.pdf

Please visit us again for Thanksgiving at www.freedomsfeast.us/thanksgiving

Your Ben Franklin moment: What serious, wise, funny, or practical thought about work would you like to share with others?



THANKSGIVING



PRESIDENTS' DAY



MLK DAY



MEMORIAL DAY



INDEPENDENCE DAY